

Main themes in the stranger novel



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In *The Stranger*, Philip Thody had a good judgement of the overall theme in the text. Thody concluded that Camus illustrated two contradicting themes, human life will be more worth living because it has no meaning and that a person who is lacking self-awareness will never have a correct representation of attitude towards life. Given these points, Thody's perspective on *The Stranger* sets a perfect display on Camus intentions on portraying these themes.

Camus addition of Marie Cardona helped to embody the theme of Meursault's outlook on the physical world. Meursault is characterized by his indifference to everything except instant physical sensations. Granted that, there exists no higher meaning or order to human life beyond the bodily world. As Meursault states, I wanted her so bad when I saw her in that pretty red-and-white striped dress and leather sandals... when she laughed I wanted her again. A minute later she asked me if I loved her. I told her it didn't mean anything but I didn't think so (Camus, 41).

Emotionally, Marie gets nothing from Meursault, but seems to be satisfied with a relationship that is more intimate than words. Her physical beauty is his only attraction to her character. Correspondingly, Marie still finds a reasoning to stay loyal to Meursault when he was arrested and put on trial. Her symbolism of loyalty towards Meursault is a blessing that comes with both pros and cons, the hope that she embraces is what Meursault is unable to attain until the end of the book, where he accepts the reality that death will be the outcome of his essence. Furthermore, despite Meursault's suffering within the walls of the cordon, his enlightenment of the universe has allowed him to distinguish a face engraved in the stone. Meursault then

infers, Maybe at one time, way back, I had searched for a face in them. But the face I was looking for was as bright as the sun and the flame of desire—and it belonged to Marie. I had searched for it in vain...in any case, I'd never seen anything emerge from any sweating stones (Camus, 119). Although, Marie lacked the understanding of abandoning all hope, Meursault concludes that he was destined to be with Marie, but at the time it was too late and she was no longer attainable. Therefore, due to his own indifferences Meursault's lack of self-awareness forbade him to grasp onto the remaining aspiration his peers held towards him.

Another major point of Camus philosophy that he follows is the theme that individual lives and human existence have no rational meaning or order. The confrontation of the Chaplain and Meursault exposes this idea and provokes Meursault having no reasoning or explanation behind his moral beliefs.

Another person's death and his own mother's love nor God or the lives and fate people choose to live do not concern Meursault's character whatsoever. For this reason, the Chaplain's anger with Meursault's refusal of God does not faze the tragic hero, and becomes oddly pleased with the realization that death is all there is. As the Chaplain explains, No, I refuse to believe you! I know that at one time or another you've wished for another life (Camus, 119).

Other than wishing to be rich, to be able to swim faster, or have a nicely shaped mouth Meursault didn't mean any more than these wants. He also adds, One where I can remember this life! (Camus, 120). For the most part, the Chaplain's assumptions allowed for Meursault to contradict whether those brief times living in the moment were actually worth it, now that he has

accepted the outcome of his essence, Meursault concludes the only certainty in life is the inevitability of death. Henceforth, Philip Thody's interpretation of Albert Camus two contradicting themes of the novel *The Stranger*, proved human life will be even more worth living because it has no meaning and that a person lacking self-awareness will never have a correct representation of attitude towards life. Meursault, the tragic hero and protagonist, although through his weaknesses, failures, and victimization, develops these significant themes.